An Exploration of Perceptions and Understanding of the Purpose of CRE and the Consequential CRE Pedagogies in Uganda

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Abstract Religion is a fundamental phenomenon in Uganda. It is perceived to be a foundation for spiritual growth and morals in Uganda. Religious education is thus central in Uganda's education system. However, this article concerns the perception and understanding of the purpose of CRE as school subject. Using qualitative methods, CRE teachers, priests and document analysis were used to collect data. Research reveals that there is no differentiation between purposes of religion as a faith and CRE as a school subject. The study unveils that the church influences CRE, dictates that CRE follows confessional pedagogies and that CRE should be compulsory.

Keywords: *christian religious education, perception, pedagogies, understanding, purposes*

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1. Introduction

Christianity is a historic phenomenon in political, economic, social and moral fabric in Uganda. In the education arena, Christianity plays a fundamental role as most schools and tertiary institutions are missionary founded. Religion is perceived as a highly constructive phenomenon in authoring, instilling and shaping morals in society. CRE is a classroom subject in many countries. However, the perception and understanding of the purpose of CRE determines the pedagogical paradigms. In this study, the pedagogical paradigms refer to the content, aims and objectives, approaches, methods of teaching as well as teaching aids.

However, between 1920 and 1960, British educationists argued that the CRE purposes needed to shift from a theological rationale. There arose a revolution in the education system that opposed the nature and approach to RE. The British educationists contended argued for the need for CRE to contribute to the academic growth and development of learners. Consequently, educationists designed CRE educational curricular and syllabi that drifted from the confessional aims and pedagogies.

Religious education is a core subject in Uganda's national curriculum and syllabus. It is an independent discipline in the school curriculum. However, religious education is a unique discipline. However, RE is a historical, cultural, political, social, economic and a contemporary subject. It affects peoples' lives from different perspectives. The Spens report [35] concluded that, "no person should be counted as properly educated unless they have been made aware of the existence of a religious interpretation of life [4].

In Uganda's education system, the essentiality of CRE as a classroom subject begun when missionaries establishment formal education. The missionary's objective was to propagate Christianity. The missionaries aimed at teaching the reading skill to enable converts read, interpret and spread the message of the bible. The teaching of religion was referred to as Christian instruction (RI). To the Christian church, the principal purpose of CRE is to nurture the Christian faith [38].

After independence, the republic of Uganda through the 1963 Education Act, regulated education. Christian instruction came to be known as Religious Education. Arguably, the teaching of religion in schools was to shift content and approaches from dogmatic to educational.

However, under RE there are two different syllabuses; Christian Religious Education (CRE) and Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Whilst there are several religions in Uganda such as Hinduism, Sikhism and traditional beliefs among others; only Christianity and Islam are recognized for RE. Currently, in secondary schools, CRE and IRE are taught as two distinctive subjects and independent of each other.

1.1. The Perceptions and Understanding of the Purpose of CRE

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education [8] in the UK stated that,
"CRE is concerned with the deep meaning that people make of their experiences .... CRE provides opportunities to explore, make and respond to the meanings of those experiences in relation to the beliefs and experiences", [9].
Like all other educations, CRE is expected to enable learners to develop critical thinking and evaluative skills

[17]. The implication here is that the CRE curriculum and syllabus ought to focus on critical thinking during the formative stage of the learners. Critical thinking involves making meaning out of things by mental reflection process which entails skilled active interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information and argumentations [11]. Grimmitt [12] a renowned RE theorist and author contended that the study of religions should;

(i) promote awareness and understanding of the nature and purpose of the religious or spiritual quest within different religions and;

(ii) promote reflection, on the part of the pupil, on the implications that the adoption of a religious view of life would have for his/her own understanding of self and for consequent development as a person.

Grimmit's [11] argument is in tandem with British educationists who between 1930's and 1960's questioned the justifications of CRE in the school syllabus. They were no longer content with a theological rationale of CRE. Consequently, there arose a demand for a sound educational rationale of CRE as a classroom subject [3]. The British educationists unanimously agreed that as a school subject, CRE had to be equally academic and contribute to learners' general personal growth and development other than instilling faith. Arguably, this is the basis against which Christian Religious Education was sustained as a classroom subject.

Conversely, data reveals that in the Ugandan Education system, CRE is perceived as a faith and moral forming classroom subject. Before independence, CRE was a compulsory subject in all missionary founded school. It was a tool for evangelization [25-31]. Yet, the British educationists abandoned such an approach for not being educational. They debated the different RE approaches in schools, that is, teaching religion and teaching about religion. Against this backdrop, [27] contends that RE has not yet developed a paradigm-or dominant and widely accepted understanding, framework or concept that serves to guide all educational thought and practice. Pazmino's [27] argument implies that while RE is an old and popular school subject, it has no agreed upon universal educational aims and purposes. This may further imply that RE has no developed classroom conceptual or theoretical frameworks. It is against this background that the current study sought to establish the perceptions and understanding of the purpose of CRE in secondary schools in Uganda.

2. The Research Context

2.1. Research Aim

The research explored the perception and understanding of the purpose of Christian Religious education and the consequential CRE pedagogical paradigms.

2.2. Research Design and Methods

Qualitative methods were employed during data collection and analysis [30]. Forty semi structured questionnaires were distributed to CRE teachers. The lead question was; In your own opinion, what is the purpose of teaching CRE in secondary schools? This was a multiple choice multiple answers closed question. Respondents were given freedom to tick all answers that applied.

Data was collected during school practice season and the researcher who was a also a school practice supervisor, had an opportunity to interact with CRE teachers in the selected secondary schools. Basing on the argument that knowledge is built through social interaction [5-18] face to face interviews and focus groups were also conducted using interview guides. Participants included fifty randomly selected CRE teachers from twenty schools. Six priests were purposively selected, two from the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), two represent the council on the NDC committees in charge of CRE curriculum designing and two are masters' students.

Two focus group interviews were conducted with eight teachers, four teachers per group. Six interviews were also conducted with six priests. Interviews were intended to obtain in-depth meaning and insight into respondents' comments concerning the purpose of CRE in secondary schools [12]. Additionally, an analysis CRE curriculum and syllabus documents was done.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was done following [32] three phase coding frame work. It followed identification and labeling of different lines of texts that were given codes and later on categorized. Dominant themes emerged and have been tabulated, interpreted and discussed.

2.4. Research Ethics

This research was conducted in compliance with the Makerere university research ethical guidelines and requirements that guide research with human subjects.

3. Results

3.1. CRE in the National Educational Curriculum and National Examination Board Syllabus

Analysis of the NCDC and UNEB documents indicate that the status of CRE in secondary school is not different from the rest of subjects. The NCDC is mandated to design the curriculum whereas UNEB is the implementation body responsible for breaking the curriculum into small teaching examinable units. The NCDC makes an implementation statement of the general purposes and goals of CRE. The NCDC also designs the content of all teaching subjects. UNEB breaks down the NCDC purposes into general purposes into study objectives to be achieved at the end of each lesson. Originally, East Africa, that is; Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania had a joint examination council which was in charge of designing the CRE curriculum and syllabi. However, in 1978 the East African Examination council was disbanded. The Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) took over of the CRE curriculum and content. The current CRE curriculum was designed in 1983 and the CRE aims, objectives and CRE content have not been

revised. The CRE curriculum was designed in view of the ministry of education policy statement that;

'The religious education syllabus is composed of two parts namely, part A: Christian religious education (CRE) and part B: Islamic religious education (IRE). Individual schools will decide which part(s) they want to teach, depending on their religious population and facilities available' [22]. Arguably, the Religious Education policy creates a divide between CRE and IRE curriculum.

3.2. The NCDC Rationale of CRE

Documents indicate that the NCDC rationale states that, 'the learner will develop a critical thinking skill, appreciate the historical analysis of the bible and open his/her mind to link the content to contemporary issues. It will instil a sense of appreciation of the cultural and social values of Christian discipline and develop the attitude of responsibility' [23].

3.3. The NCDC Aims of RE

The NCDC (2013) states that, 'the aims and objectives of teaching religious education have come to be perceived as purely educational and not religious or denominational. This is why it is called Religious Education not Religious Instruction'. These are-:

1. To provide children with an insight into the nature of religion and what it means to be religious
2. To help children acquire and develop skills which will enable them appreciate religious ideas and practices
3. To make available factual information about religion and religious phenomena
4. To encourage attitudes of openness and sensitivity towards people whom religious beliefs and customs may be different from their own
5. To provide in particular an awareness of the nature and claims of religious and of the part it has played in shaping the cultural and social life of Uganda
6. To help children to identify those areas of human life and experience in which religion plays a significant part.
7. To explore with the children the relation between religion and other areas of experience and knowledge
8. To contribute towards the learner's moral development [22].

Noting from the above, it can be argued that the NCDC aims of CRE as stated imply that the content of CRE is not attuned to the Christian faith and doctrine. For instance, the NCDC aims imply that what is taught is religion and not Christianity. Conversely, this study reveals that what is taught under CRE is strictly Christian religion and not any other. Indeed, bible verses are regularly quoted in the CRE content.

An analysis of the secondary school CRE content indicate that CRE focus on teaching and analysing Christian faith and doctrine. An examination of the NCDC CRE objectives indicates that the objectives and aims are not in tandem. Whilst the aims talk about religion,

objectives focus on Christianity. This is further revealed in the NCDC CRE general aims as indicated below.

3.4. NCDC Objectives for CRE

The stated CRE general objectives is that CRE is 'to develop an awareness and knowledge of God's presence and purpose in the world as revealed through His creation, the Bible, the Christian community, the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the holy Spirit living in the church today'. A breakdown of this main objective is as follows;

1. To develop Christian virtues of love, joy, peace and service in the child and build a personal Christian ideal to inspire his/her development and maturity
2. To live a committed Christian life following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ
3. To get knowledge of the teachings of the Bible and apply it in the Christian life or churches today
4. To appreciate the common elements in traditional religion, other religions and Christian beliefs
5. To develop the Christian moral values of honesty, concerns for others, sharing, tolerance and justice [23].

Such objectives clearly indicate that CRE is purposely religious and denominational. In order to achieve such aims and objectives, CRE need to employ confessional pedagogies. Yet, such pedagogies aim at teaching for commitment. Confessional CRE seeks to nourish, support, mould and encourage full hearted participation and membership of a child to a distinct religious confession [20]. Grimmitt [14] observed that forms of confessional RE are not compatible with the needs and nature of public and secular education.

UNEB aims of CRE are also confessional in nature and attract the use of confessional pedagogies. The UNEB aims at UACE include;

(i) To deepen students' understanding of the religious dimensions of life as contained in the Biblical revelation, Christian history, African culture and contemporary Christian faith

(ii) To enable the student to develop insights into religious values and to relate these values to life as a basis for judgments and choices in a changing and developing African society

(iii) To give the student a deeper understanding of the bass of the Christian faith and its relevance to life today

To lay an adequate academic foundation for those who wish to pursue the study of religion at a specialist level [27,36].

As noted from the above, the stated aims reveal that confessional pedagogical paradigms as appropriate to achieve such objectives. Similarly, the UNEB [36] aims for Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) state as follows;

(i) To enable the student to grow towards responsible Christian maturity

(ii) To enable the student to see more clearly the elements of his/her faith in his life

(iii) To enhance him/her make his/her own values he/she now considers worth while

(iv) To enable him/her bring these values to the world by relating his/her Christian faith to his/her life in the

changing and developing society of which he/she is a member.

These aims and objectives cannot be achieved without the use of confessional pedagogies. CRE only concerns the Bible and core Christian doctrine regarding contemporary issues. Consequently, schools are agencies for evangelisation. CRE is aimed at handing over the Christian faith and to nourish the spirituality of the young within the context of the church. The current CRE syllabus is explicitly Christian in content and orientation. It emphasizes life themes which introduce children to Biblical concepts and Christian practice.

Whilst, Crawford and Rossiter, [10] observe that government schools should actively promote the moral values which are shared by the majority of people in the community. Conversely, the current CRE objectives and aims make it plausible to conclude that CRE instils Christian doctrines. Against this backdrop, it is arguable that CRE aims cannot be achieved without confessional pedagogies.

4. The Status of Religion in Regard to CRE

Mbiti [19] a prominent scholar observed that RE in Africa could be traced long before the coming of Christian missionaries. Religion is believed to sustain Ugandans through the bad times, spiritually, materially, morally and psychologically [21]. Mbiti [19] added that religion is the strongest element that exerts the greatest influence upon the life. As a matter of principle, religious teachings have traditionally been the vehicle by which moral standards are inculcated in societies [1].

In addition to the strong religious sentiments of the African people, formal school education Uganda was first founded by Christian missionaries. The government intervention in the education system came as a recommendation of the Phelps-Stokes Commission [34]. However, to date, statistics indicate that many schools are founded and are still governed and operated by religious organizations. The table below shows ownership of schools in Uganda.

4.1. Secondary Schools by Founding Body

Founding body	No. of schools	Percentage
Government	159	5.1
Islamic	140	4.5
COU	498	15.8
Catholic	528	16.8
SDA	44	1.4
Parents	441	14.0
Entrepreneurs	1014	32.2
Not reported	325	10.3
Grand Totals	3149	100

Source: Uganda Education Statistical Abstract.

From the table, it's noted that the biggest number of schools in Uganda belong to the Christian church namely, the Church of Uganda (COU), Roman Catholic Church and Seventh Day Adventist church. Regarding the mandate of the Christian church in schools, a priest argued that,

"… being the founders and owners of these schools, the church established a partnership with the government. We are partners even according to the law today; we are partners with government in terms of management and what is provided in these schools..."

Similarly, a UJCC officer explained that,

"since most of the schools belong to us, the church, we must make a contribution because we founded them for a purpose and this purpose was based on the values, the Christian values which we cherish" Bob.

Although the business fraternity is now engaged in construction and running of schools as a lucrative business. The private school entrepreneurs still identify their privately owned schools with their respective religious faiths. Therefore, not so many schools can claim a purely secular or public status. Subsequently, religion influences a fair share in the construction and running of schools in Uganda. In an interview with one of the priests, he argued that,

"we are the owners of these schools, we have a great stake and we contribute to the CRE syllabuses. One of the stakes is why did we found these schools or why were these schools founded? They were founded for a purpose of instilling our Christian faith and values" (Moses).

In terms of schools' leadership, the Christian church influences headship and the general administration of missionary and other religiously founded schools. Another priest commented;

"In terms of leadership, we the Christian church participates in deciding who heads which school. The ministry cannot make appointments to any of our schools without consulting the church which is the foundational body. We are the owners of these schools; sometimes the government grant aids them. Secondly, it is pertinent that we make sure inculcation of the Christian values, of which we stand for, is done. Because we are Christian, by our virtues we have an unquestionable stake in what is taught in those schools particularly when it comes to religious education" (John).

Subsequently, the mandate of the church in the country's education affairs stems from the effort the church puts in the education sector. The Christian churches under the representation of UJCC contribute to the policies; intervene in the running and planning programs of Uganda's ministry of education. For instance, the UJCC joined in the call to review the poor or low salaries for teachers. In union with interreligious council of Uganda, the UJCC makes constructive recommendations to the government concerning the implementation of Universal primary education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) [2].

The church based tertiary that are also founded with an aim of producing morally upright and honest Christian clerks, traders, interpreters and chiefs. The main focus was to produce educated Christians rather than educated Ugandans.

Consequently, the study reveals that to a greater extent, CRE is perceived to be for the purpose of instilling Christian moral and values. CRE teaches doctrines of

Christian faith with an aim to instill discipline, ethics, moral values, virtues and strengthen the Christian faith.

Thematic analysis of the semi-structured questionnaires, direct interviews and focus group discussions revealed the following themes as tabulated below with the corresponding number of respondents. The results of the study are discussed together with literature. In order to obtain deeper insights into how respondents perceive and understand the purpose of CRE in secondary schools, respondents were asked the following question;

5. Question: In Your Own Opinion, What is the Purpose of Teaching CRE in Secondary Schools?

	Response	N0. of resp
1	For moral upbringing of students and emphasize good morals	52
2	To help them pass exams	08
3	To enable learners acquire knowledge about their religion	02
4	To instill discipline	38
	To instill values	41
5	To give learners knowledge which helps them live n a society	26
6	CRE makes learners obedient to teachers and elders	38
7	How to respect elders and leaders	43
8	To produce teachers of religious education	17
9	To enable learners acquire historical information about their religion	05
10	To help to overcome prejudices and negative stereotype	01
11	To emphasize, deepen and strengthen the faith and beliefs	49
12	To bring about well disciplined students who behave well in accordance to the biblical commandments	29
13	Learners share with each other the different beliefs and customs	06
14	Religion is one of the important sectors in the world and this make very vital to teach it in school	01
15	To instill religious beliefs in students	30
16	To emphasize unity and love	13
17	To help after leaving school as they meet people from different backgrounds, traditions and religious beliefs	31

Source: Field data.

Data reveals three sets of opinions; firstly, CRE is perceived and understood as a vehicle for instilling morals; secondly, the purpose of CRE is to strengthen the Christian faith and; lastly, CRE is perceived as a subject promotes full development of learners.

5.1. CRE is Shapes Morals and Instils Ethical Values

As shown in the table, the prominent themes that feature include moral development, deepening of the Christian faith and for personal development. 52 responses

indicate that CRE is perceived and understood to be for the purpose of instilling morals into the learners. A teacher commented that;

CRE is a subject that concerns morality, guides the young people on issues of sex before marriage and homosexuality (Brenda).

It thus follows that CRE is believed to modify learners' behaviors by emphasizing the Mosaic Law that condemn vices another teacher argued that',

'since CRE concerns biblical teachings which embed the Mosaic Law that condemns vices such as theft, murder and adultery among others. Subsequently, CRE potentially modifies peoples' behavior', (Jessica).

It is clear that CRE is understood as a subject that shapes behavior. Wim [39] states that churches perceive schools as 'places of godliness, church schools focus their aims on the ethos and Christian values and biblical faith is seen as central'. A Catholic Church bishop explained that,

'If all schools go back to their religious foundation and teach religion to children at all levels, it would help minimize immoral and evil behaviours, such as corruption, murder, rape, defilement, jealous and others among the current and future generations, which will help the country', (Zziwa).

He adds that,

… 'in order to regain morals among the young generation, schools must go back to the basics and teach religion. If the young children are taught religion from the grassroots no doubt, it will help not only the homes but also the Government and the whole country to have people of good behaviour.'

It's against the moral argument that UJCC proposed to make the subject compulsory in Christian founded schools. While according to [21] such a proposal was rejected by the Ugandan parliament, interactions with teachers indicate that in Catholic Church schools, learners are obliged to study CRE from S.1 to S.4.

It's against arguments that CRE has a purpose to instill morality that between 2007 and 2008, the church leaders challenged a government proposal to eliminate the teaching of religious education in schools. One priest argued that;

"the proposal to eliminate religious education from the school syllabus is unacceptable in a country where the greatest battle is that of morals" [24].

A former minister was quoted;

"If God can only be talked about in homes and churches, we are destined for moral disaster" [21].

Similarly, another priest contended that;

"…nobody will agree to the policy that eliminates Religious Education from schools because the greatest battle we have at the moment is that centered on morals, whether we are dealing with HIV and AIDS or issues of governance" Sam.

It is against such moral arguments, that church leaders successfully challenged the policy to eliminate RE. Respondents expressed that CRE instills morals through;

(i) Emphasizing respect for elders and adults: The notion of respect is critical in African societies [33]. CRE is perceived and understood as a subject that enhances a sense of respect among the young generation. Simphiwe [33] contends that African cultures are emphatic that the young must unquestionably respect elders. In this regard,

there is a common belief that any religion has a responsibility to ensure that the young respect the elders and leaders. On the contrary, [29] argues that through CRE, the young people should be enabled to understand and respect the beliefs and practices of others and thereby strengthen social cohesion. However, the on-going expressions and responses indicate that the current CRE teaching is exclusive of other religious beliefs. In this regard, CRE in Uganda does not inculcate respect to other faiths. It can thus be concluded that CRE does not help the young towards the understanding and living in a world of diversity [29].

(ii) Inculcation of values: CRE opens learners to the study of values. Respondents pointed out that CRE teaches social values such as honesty, trustworthy, kindness, forgiveness, sharing, helping and responsibility. This expression is in agreement with [28] argument that the task of CRE is to develop in young people the specific values that the society consider necessary for a mature and responsible member of the community. As an aim of education, inculcation of values of important. Nevertheless, CRE pedagogies ought to be educational, not only aiming at Christian values. A link must exist between CRE and educational goals. Besides, it is pertinent that CRE teachers enable learners clarify their understanding of issues and reflect on the meaning of these values to them.

(iii) Making children obedient: Obedience is a society value and is desired to be seen in children. The aspect of obedience is based on the Christian doctrine of reward (heaven) and punishment (hell). As Kamau [16] states that the interpretation of obedience based on either the physical or hedonistic consequences of action (i.e. punishment, reward or exchange of favors) or the physical powers of those who articulate the rules and labels. A respondent contended that,

> "CRE is seen as a tool to instill obedience in the young people since the bible teaches that Jesus Christ is coming back; this is the element of patience", (teacher Sarah).

The above comments and expressions further confirm that CRE is perceived as subject that instills and strengthens morals, ethics, offers guidance to relationships and benchmarks decision making. Religion is looked as a subject that entirely concerns morality that guides people on issues of sex before marriage and homosexuality. It has been asserted that the current moral degeneration in Uganda is seen as a result of lack of proper Christian education. A situation that has resulted in increased crime rate.

> "Children produce children, something we never saw in the 1960s. Schools are provided with condoms as licenses for sex crimes, which often end up in abortion. Ignorance of the scripture is ignorance of Christ", [26].

5.2. Strengthening of the Christian Faith

Data reveals that strengthening and deepening of the Christian faith ranks second with 49 ticks. The notion of strengthening faith was also observed by [10] who argued that CRE is understood in terms of promoting learners faith development, deepening their spirituality, inculcating moral values, changing their attitudes, instilling a sense of religious identity and improving their Mass attendance. Christ's teachings are seen as the overall raisons d'être of

the Christian schools as a writing on a school wall at the entrance that,

> 'Let it be known To All who enter here that Christ is the reason for this School, the unseen but ever present teacher in its classes, the model for its faculty and the inspiration to students'.

This research found that CRE is compulsory in the school where this writing was found.

5.3. Promoting Personal Development

The table indicates that a few respondents pointed out opinions which echo CRE as an academic subject that aims at personal development. For instance; through CRE, learners

(i) share with each other the different beliefs and customs;
(ii) obtain knowledge which helps them live in a society;
(iii) understand historical facts and acquire information about their religion to overcome prejudices and negative stereotypes;
(iv) understand the social, economic, political and other issues in society and how to use knowledge in real life situation;
(v) CRE lessons are necessary because after leaving school as young meet people from backgrounds, traditions, and religious beliefs from across the world and;
(vi) Religion is one of the most important sectors in the world and this makes it very vital to teach it in school.

The above opinions reveal that some respondents note that CRE has educational purposes other than instilling morals and strengthening of the Christian faith. Conversely, the NCDC and UNEB specific objectives are only oriented towards morals and values of Christianity and do not regard such objectives.

6. The CRE Pedagogical Paradigms

The study reveals that the perceptions and understanding of the purpose of CRE point towards confessional pedagogical paradigms, that is; the content, objectives and aims, teaching syllabus, approaches, teaching methods and aids focus on instilling morals and strengthening Christianity.

This implies that teaching is purely confessional. 'Confessional' is derived from the phrase "confessing the faith". It presumes that all learners are or should be of one faith and that commitment to expression of this faith is to be openly encouraged [10]. In this respect, confessional approaches and methods to seek to nourish, support, mould and encourage full hearted participation and membership of a child to a distinct religious confession [20]. The confessional approach aims at converting learners into confessing the doctrines of the particular doctrine taught to them. The methods used in teaching are also confessional that include evangelization, preaching, Christian witnessing, praise and worship that aim at changing learners attitudes in favour of the particular religious faith. Confessional pedagogical paradigms aim at teaching for commitment.

However, the confessional pedagogical paradigm is criticized for several reasons;

(i) It is not educational, while it aims at spiritual growth and development in the Christian religious faith, it does lead to the full personal development.

(ii) It does not cater for the secular needs

(iii) It does not aim at the cultural diversity needs.

(iv) It crudely conditions and indoctrinates learners into views which may be highly questionable if not actually meaningless: in the cold hard glare of rational scientific scrutiny [6].

(v) they do not allow open discussion concerning the particular religion that is taught;

(vi) The confessional approach is indoctrinative and aims at closing the minds of the students to other options in an uncritical manner and ;

(vii) Confessional approaches and methods curtail children's future ability to choose from the array of alternatives provided by the larger social order.

It is against such arguments, that between 1934 and 1960's philosophers such as John Hull, Edwin Cox and Smith David contended that CRE pedagogies should be educational. CRE should aim at enabling learners to express and encourage the value of rational autonomy in a liberal society and the development of critical understanding and analysis [15]. They further argued that in order for an activity to count as education, it must meet three criteria;

(i) It must be an initiation into some worthwhile area of knowledge or experience. It must depend upon a common and perhaps a temporary view of life; it may allow science and must exclude necromancy and shove-halfpenny;

(ii) The activity must be set in a rational tradition: it must include reason and reasonableness in some way- it must exclude behavioral therapy and track-training on the grounds that they are mechanical or unconscious;

(iii) It must promote independence of mind. Conditioning or indoctrination would not meet this criteria because they both try, in different ways to set up patterns of behavior which will be proof against critical thought.

A close re-examination of the NCDC aims of RE shows that they are not confessional nor denominational, they are in agreement with educational aims as expressed by the philosophers and educational thinkers (see § 3.2). However, the NCDC CRE curriculum content and UNEB syllabus are purely confessional. The content and syllabus do not focus on achieving the educational purposes as stated. The nature of the CRE content is confessional and requires the use confessional pedagogies. The NCDC compartmentalization of RE into CRE and IRE suggests that each focus on a particular faith. CRE is taught independent of other religions. While there are different religious denominations such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, the NCDC CRE curricular does not include concepts of these other religions. In this regard, the CRE learner is not given any opportunity to learn about other religions to compare concepts, analyse historical origins of beliefs and practices.

Thus, the NCDC aims are not in tandem with the NCDC CRE teaching content and syllabus. Moreover,

some of the UNEB aims such as UNEB (2005) clearly indicate that the CRE syllabus aims and objectives are confessional rather than educational. Such CRE objectives include;

(i) To deepen students understanding of the religious dimensions of life as contained in the Biblical revelation, Christian history, African culture and contemporary Christian faith;

(ii) To enable the student to develop insights into religious values and to relate these values to life as a basis for judgments and choices in a changing and developing African society and;

(iii) To give the student a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and its relevance to life today (UNEB 2008; 1987; 1998).

Similarly, other aims include;

(i) To enable the student to grow towards responsible Christian maturity;

(ii) To enable the student to see more clearly the elements of his/her faith in his life and;

(iii) To enable him/her bring these values to the world by relating his/her Christian faith to his/her life in the changing and developing society of which he/she is a member (UNEB, 2005).

All these aims focus on deepening the Christian values. It is arguable that CRE teachers interpret and break the content, syllabus, design methods and aids to suit such aims in a confessional way. Consequently, teachers teach in way that strengthens the Christian beliefs and change learner attitudes in favour of the Christianity. In order to achieve educational aims and avoid confessional purposes, the CRE content and syllabus ought to be inclusive of concepts from other religions of the world.

7. Conclusion

CRE is designed to teach Christian values, ethics and morals. Data reveals that the strong influence of Christianity in Uganda make it difficult for the RE syllabus and content to aim at educational aims and objectives. Conversely, it follows that the CRE pedagogies are designed to emphasize in a confessional way. CRE teachers engage learners in CRE lesson activities in which they read and recall religious facts as they emanate from the bible. No wonder that for a long time, CRE teachers were mainly religious people, the catechists, nuns and priests. CRE teachers have no option; they employ confessional pedagogical paradigms in CRE.

Common Acronyms

Christian Religious Education (CRE), Religious Education (RE), National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC), Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB).

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